

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 ACDA-05 SAM-01 SAJ-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00 IO-10

AID-05 EB-07 MC-02 /104 W
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R 181215Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8218

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

USLO PEKING

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 5268

NOFORN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MARR, IN, UR

SUBJ: SOVIET DEFENSE MINISTER GRECHKO'S VISIT TO INDIA

SUMMARY: SPECULATION ON THE RESULTS OF SOVIET DEFENSE
MINISTER GRECHKO'S VISIT TO DELHI FEBRUARY 24-27 CONTINUES
IN DIPLOMATIC AND INDIAN CIRCLES. IT HAS BEEN SUGGESTED BY
SEVERAL SOURCES THAT GRECHKO MADE A RELAXED PITCH ON ASIAN
COLLECTIVE SECURITY AND MRS. GANDHI DID NOT DEIGN TO REPLY.
THE INDIAN NAVY APPEARS TO HAVE BENEFITTED MOST IN TERMS
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OF THE ARMS TRANSACTIONS, ALTHOUGH LATE INDICATIONS ALSO

ARE THAT THE AIR FORCE MAY HAVE FOUND ITS LONG-SOUGHT MARITIME RECONNAISSANCE AIRCRAFT. THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE GRECHKO VISIT FOR MRS. GANDHI'S LONG-DELAYED VISIT TO MOSCOW ARE ALSO BEING BRUITEDSFABOUT. END SUMMARY.

1. INFORMATION AVAILABLE HERE ON THE RESULTS OF THE FEBRUARY VISIT OF SOVIET DEFENSE MINISTER GRECHKO CONTINUES TO BE SPARSE. WE ARE TOLD THAT DEFENSE SECRETARY GOVIND NARAIN RECENTLY TOLD THE UK HIGH COMMISSIONER THAT THE VIUCT WAS "MOSTLY TALK." WHILE NARAIN MAY HAVE INTENDED HIS COMMENT TO DESCRIBE THE POLITICAL AS OPPOSED TO THE ARMS ASPECTS OF THE VISIT (PARAGRAPH 3), NEITHER FOREIGN NOR INDIAN OFFICIALS (OR JOURNALISTS) HERE APPEAR ABLE OR WILLING TO DESCRIBE MUCH MORE GRAPHICALLY WHAT WENT ON, EITHER ON THE POLITICAL OR THE DEFENSE SIDE. (THE EMBASSY IS OF COURSE AWARE OF INTELLIGENCE REPORTING ON THE VISIT BUT HAS NOT SPECIFICALLY INCORPORATED SUCH REPORTING IN THIS MESSAGE, WHICH IS ESSENTIALLY BASED ON OPEN INDIAN AND DIPLOMATIC SOURCES IN DELHI).

2. ONE EXCEPTION IS THE ROMANIAN POLITICAL COUNSELOR WHO CLAIMS THAT HE HAS LEARNED ON GOOD AUTHORITY THAT GRECHKO MADE AND EXTENDED BUT ENTIRELY RELAXED PRESENTATION ON THE ASIAN COLLECTIVE SECURITY PROPOSAL. ACCORDING TO THE ROMANIAN, GRECHKO REASONED DURING HIS MEETING WITH MRS. GANDHI THAT COUNTRIES OF THIS REGION, INCLUDING THE SOVIET UNION, SHOULD UNDERTAKE CLOSER COOPERATION IN THE ECONOMIC, SCIENTIFIC/TECHNICAL AS WELL AS THE POLITICAL FIELD. GRECHKO DID NOT PLAY UP THE U.S. OR CHINA DANGER IN HIS STATEMENT BUT ACCENTED THE POSITIVE. THE ROMANIAN SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THAT MRS. GANDHI ANSWERED GRECHKO WITH A CHILLING SILENCE. (A RESPECTED INDIAN JOURNALIST HAS LENT SOME WEIGHT TO THIS ACCOUNT BY WRITING THAT MRS. GANDHI TACTFULLY AVOIDED ANY DISCUSSION OF THE COLLECTIVE SECURITY PROPOSAL). THE ROMANIAN SAID THAT A SOVIET EMBASSY OFFICER SUBSEQUENTLY CONFIRMED TO HIM THAT MRS. GANDHI HAD SAID NOTHING BUT THAT THE SOVIET EMBASSY INTERPRETED THIS TO MEAN WHE WAS NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST THE PROPOSAL. WITH RESPECT TO POSSIBLE TALK ABOUT SOVIET BASES, THE ROMANIAN AS WELL AS OTHER DIPLOMATS HERE HAVE REPORTED ESSENTIALLY AS CONFIDENTIAL

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THE WEST GERMAN DIPLOMAT (REFTEL), THAT GRECHKO AND HIS AIDES DID NOT PURSUE THE QUESTION DIRECTLY.

3. THERE IS A DEARTH OF INFORMATION AT MISSIONS HERE ON THE DEFENSE ASPECTS OF THE VISIT. A FRENCH MILITARY ATTACHE COMPLAINED TO US THAT THE RECENT KANAVSKI AFFAIR (WHICH RESULTED IN THE EXEMPLARY PUNISHMENT OF AN INDIAN OFFICER WHO HAD ASSOCIATED WITH THE ASSISTANT SOVIET MILITARY

ATTACHE KANAVSKI, NEW DELHI 3746) HAD THE EFFECT OF
SILENCING HIS CONTACTS. THE BRITISH WERE TOLD BY A SOVIET
POLITICAL COUNSELOR, WHO HAS BEEN HELPFUL IN THE PAST,
THAT HE KNEW NOTHING SINCE THE VISIT WAS HANDLED BY THE
SOVIET DEFENSE SIDE, WHICH APPARENTLY WASN'T COMMENTING.
NONETHELESS OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH OUR COLLEAGUES POINT TO
THE FOLLOWING CONCLUSIONS AS TO HOW EACH BRANCH OF THE
INDIAN MILITARY FARED:

(1) NAVY - MOST BELIEVE THE INDIAN NAVY WAS THE PRIME
BENEFICIARY OF THE GRECHKO (AND OTHER RECENT RELEALED)
VISITS AND WILL ACQUIRE SEVERAL MISSILE EQUIPPED
CORVETTE-CLASS VESSELS FROM THE SOVIETS. THE GOI IS
APPARENTLY NOT SERIOUS AT THIS TIME ABOUT THE COMPARABLE
FRENCH OR BRITISH VESSELS AT THE TERMS BEING OFFERED.
THE FRENCH TELL US THAT THE INDIANS HAVE NOT APPROACHED
THEM FOR WELL OVER A YEAR, AND THE BRITISH SAY, MORE
CAUTIOUSLY, THAT HMG'S UNWILLINGNESS TO EXTEND SUFFICIENT
CREDIT CONTINUES TO PRECLUDE THE SALE OF BRITISH CORVETTES,
EVEN THOUGH THERE ARE PERIODIC TALKS. (A UK BRITISH
OFFICER TOLD US THE GOI HAD SOUGHT TERMS ON THE ORDER OF
15 YEARS AT 3.5 PERCENT WHILE THE BRITISH WERE STILL
REQUIRING REPAYMENT OVER 5 YEARS AT 7 PERCENT INTEREST,
WITH A LIMITED GRACE PERIOD).

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ACTION NEA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8219

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY UKAHMANDU

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
USLO PEKING
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMCONSUL BOMBAY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L FINAL SECTION OF 2 NEW DELHI 5268

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(2) AIR FORCE - THE GRECHKO VISIT IS JUDGED BY MOST SOURCES TO HAVE BORNE LITTLE OR NO FRUIT FOR THE INDIAN AIR FORCE, WHICH CONTINUES TO SEEK MARITIME RECONNAISSANCE AND TACTICAL STRIKE AIRCRAFT WHICH IT CAN AFFORD. (THE STATESMAN, A DELHI PAPER, WAS INSPIRED TO EDITORIALIZE A FEW DAYS AGO ON THE SUBJECT OF INDIA'S LACK OF DEEP PENETRATION STRIKE AIRCRAFT AND THE "TOTAL INADEQUACY" - THE IAF AIR CHIEF'S DESCRIPTION - OF THE SIX SUPER CON-STELLATIONS NOW PERFORMING MARITIME RECONNAISSANCE). ABOUT THE TIME OF THE SOVIET VISIT THERE WAS MUCH SPECULATION
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THAT THE IAF WOULD CONTRACT FOR THE ILLYUSHIN-38 AS ITS RECONNAISSANCE AIRCRAFT. IT SEEMED "MOST PLAUSIBLE" IN THE WORDS OF A UK DIPLOMAT. MOREOVER IT WAS FELT THAT IF THE IAF WAS SERIOUS ABOUT UPDATING ITS CAPABILITY IN THIS REGARD, THERE WAS LITTLE OTHER CHOICE. THE BRITISY NIMROD HAS BEEN VARIOUSLY DESCRIBED HERE AS "NOT AVAILABLE" (UK DIPLOMAT) OR "NOT ADEQUATE FOR GOI ASW SPECIFICATIONS" (FRENCH MILITARY ATTACHE). THE BREQUET ATLANTIC WAS ALSO SAID TO BE UNAVAILABLE AND OUT-OF-THE-QUESTION. NONETHELESS, SEVEN WEEKS AFTER THE GRECHKO VISIT, WE STILL HEAR FROM SEVERAL SOURCES THAT THE IAF IS NOT CONSIDERING THE SOVIET AIRCRAFT. DESPITE THE FOREIGN EXCHANGE OBSTACLES, THEY REPORT THAT THE IAF CONTINUES TO THINK IN TERMS OF A WESTERN MARITIME RECONNAISSANCE AIRCRAFT. IN THE PAST FEW DAYS, THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL INDIAN PRESS REPORTS, MOWEVER, AFFIRMING AGAIN THAT THE III-38 IS BEING ACQUIRED IN UNSPECIFIED NUMBERS. THE IAF'S INTENTIONS WITH REGARD TO A STRIKE AIRCRAFT

APPEAR EVEN LESS CLEAR. THE BRITISH TELL US THAT DESULTORY DISCUSSIONS TE THE JAGUAR CONTINUE, WITH A HIGH-LEVEL U.K. DEFENSE SALES TEAM HAVING VISITED INDIA MARCH 10 AND 11. BUT THE BRITISH SAY THAT THEY ARE NOT IN A POSITION IN THIS INSTANCE TO PROVIDE ANY CREDITS TO INDIA ("IF THE INDIANS

WANT CREDIT, THEY CAN RAISE THE MONEY IN THE CITY"), AND THE AIRCRAFT IS NOT AVAILABLE UNTIL 1982. LIKEWISE THE FRENCH. THEY SAY THAT THE INDIANS HAVE BEEN DICKERING WITH THEM ABOUT THE MIRAGE FOR SEVERAL YEARS, BUT CANNOT COME UP WITH THE MONEY. (A FRENCH EMBASSY POLITICAL OFFICER ELABORATED BY SAYING THE INDIANS HAD NOT TO HIS KNOWLEDGE SUBMITTED A SPECIFIC PROPOSAL ON THE MIRAGE, AND THAT THERE APPEARED TO BE A BIAS IN PARIS IN ANY EVENT AGAINST SUCH SALES BOTH BECAUSE OF A CONTINUING GOOD ARMS RELATIONSHIP WITH PAKISTAN AND A VAGUE CONCERN ABOUT SOVIET ACCESS TO MILITARY ITEMS SENT HERE).

(3) ARMY - WE HAVE ALSO HEARD THE REPORTS DESCRIBED IN REFTEL THAT SOVIET SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILES CAME UP FOR DISCUSSION, WITH AS YET NO DEFINITE DECISION. OUR COLLEAGUES HAVE ALSO REFERRED VAGUELY TO THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE TWO SIDES ALSO DISCUSSED SOVIET TANKS. NO SUPPORT
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WAS GIVEN TO THE PROPOSITION (REFTEL) THAT THEY INDIANS ARE SUPPLYING THE WARSAW PACT COUNTRIES WITH AMMUNITION.

4. COMMENT - SEVERAL SOURCES, INCLUDING A POLISH FIRST SECRETARY, HAVE SUGGESTED TO US THAT THE GREECHKO VISIT MIGHT HAVE THE EFFECT OF POSTPONING MRS. GANDHI'S ALREADY LONG-DELAYED VISIT TO MOSCOW. APART FROM THE RUBLE/RUPEE QUESTION THE TWO SIDES REPORTEDLY EXCHANGED IDEAS ON MOST OF THE IMPORTANT ISSUES IN INDO-SOVIET RELATIONS, THUS REDUCING THE URGENCY OF ARRANGING A GANDHI-BREZHNEV MEETING LATER THIS SPRING. WE HAVE HEARD FROM BOTH MEA AND SOVIET OFFICIALS THAT THERE IS NO CURRENT PLANNING FOR SUCH A VISIT. WITH DOMESTIC PROBLEMS PILING UP HERE, A VISIT BY THE PRIME MINISTER LATER RATHER THAN EARLIER IN THE YEAR SEEMS INCREASINGLY LIKELY. AT THE SAME TIME THE PRIME MINISTER'S DECISION TO GO TO THE COMMONWEALTH PRIME MINISTER'S CONFERENCE IN JAMAICA AT THE END OF APRIL UNDERCUTS THE CREDIBILITY OF INDIAN ARGUMENTS (WHICH WE UNDERSTAND HAVE BEEN OFFERED TO THE SOVIETS IN RECENT MONTHS) THAT MRS. GANDHI CANNOT AFFORD TO BE AWAY FROM INDIA ON A LONG TRIP AT THIS TIME. AS THE INDIAN ELECTIONS MOVE CLOSER (END OF THE YEAR OR EARLY 1976), THE TIMING OF A VISIT TO MOSCOW TAKES ON EVER INCREASING DOMESTIC POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE VIS-A-VIS CONGRESS PARTY-COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA RELATIONS.
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